

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In the present Office action, claims 1-4, 6, and 8-15 were examined. Claims 1-4, 6, and 8-15 were rejected. Claims 1, 8, 9, and 13 have been amended in accordance with the examiner's instructions. No new matter has been added. Claims 1-4, 6, and 8-15 are believed to be in condition for allowance.

Applicant wishes to extend sincere gratitude to Examiner Sterling for the kindness extended to Applicants' Attorney in the form of an interview on August 6, 2004. During the interview, Examiner Sterling was most helpful in working to arrive at claim language suitable to the Applicants and sufficient for patentability. Specifically, as noted in the comments portion of the Interview Summary written at the interview, "Applicant suggested changing u-shaped fork element to counterpart fork coupling element and that the open leg ends would be changes to leg portions in line with the specification. This has been agreed upon and should render the case in condition for allowance."

Claim rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112

The Examiner had previously rejected claim 1 for reciting "open leg ends" in line 22 claiming that there to be insufficient antecedent basis for the limitation in the claim. The examiner further rejected claim 8 for citing a "u-shaped fork element" as seeming to be the same as the "counterpart fork coupling element" found in claim 1, line 13. The examiner further noted that it was unclear how the "pivot portion" found in claim 1, line 12, could be "non-rotatable" as stated by claims 8-11 and 13. Lastly, the examiner rejected claim 9 for

citing a "fork element" as there is insufficient antecedent basis for the limitation in the claim.

As noted above, agreement was reached on amended language so as to traverse the pending grounds for rejection. Specifically, in claim 1, "open leg ends" has been changed to "first and second leg portions". In claim 8, the language "by a u-shaped fork element which is such that, with a central connecting portion, it can be" has been changed to "in that said counterpart fork coupling element is". Similarly, in claim 9 "fork element" has been changed to "counterpart fork coupling element". As claim 13 depends upon claim 8, the language "fork element" has likewise been changed to "counterpart fork coupling element". It was further discussed with the examiner that although the pivot portion as claimed in claim 1 can be rotated, it may be secured in a non-rotatable fashion as stated by claims 8-11 and 13. It is therefore not unclear how the pivot portion can be non-rotatable. As a result of these amendments, in consonance with the examiner's suggestions and the agreement reached between the examiner and the Applicants' Attorney on August 6, 2004, it is respectfully submitted that the examiner's grounds for rejection have been traversed with respect to claims 1, 8, and 9. As all of remaining claims 2-4, 6, and 10-15 are dependent upon claims 1, 8, and 9, such claims now believed to be in condition for allowance, these claims are likewise believed to be in condition for allowance.

An earnest and thorough attempt has been made by the undersigned to resolve the outstanding issues in this case and place same in condition for allowance. If the Examiner has any questions or feels that a telephone or personal interview would be helpful in resolving any outstanding issues which remain in

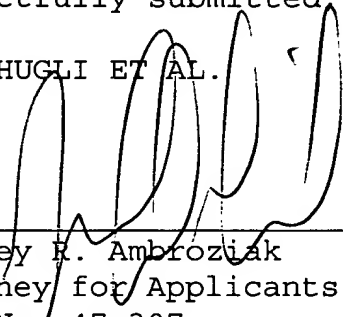
this application after consideration of this amendment, the Examiner is courteously invited to telephone the undersigned and the same would be gratefully appreciated.

It is submitted that the claims as amended herein patentably define over the art relied on by the Examiner and early allowance of same is courteously solicited.

If fees are required in connection with this case, it is respectfully requested that they be charged to Deposit Account No. 02-0184.

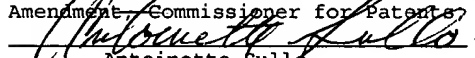
Respectfully submitted

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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: "Mail Stop Amendment, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313" on August 17, 2004


Antoinette Sullo